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Ex-Employee Tells of Trip With Suspect in Navy Spy Case

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NORFOLK, Va., May 25 — John A. Walker, the retired Navy warrant officer charged with espionage, is a "flaky" adventurer who "thought of himself as a James Bond when he was really an Inspector Clouseau," according to a woman who once worked with him.

The woman, R. K. Puma, 35 years old, also described a 1977 incident, in which she followed Mr. Walker's directions and left a bag of papers in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, that appeared to closely match the circumstances leading to Mr. Walker's arrest last weekend.

Mrs. Puma put herself through Old Dominion University here in part with money earned from some of Mr. Walker's business enterprises. Aside from the incident in 1977, many of her duties were routine, she said, adding that she was surprised by the charges that Mr. Walker had passed Navy secrets to the Soviet Union.

Mrs. Puma said that Mr. Walker asked her to go with him on "a mission" in the spring of 1977 and gave her verbal and written instructions to look for soda cans along the Maryland roadside as clues to the point where she was

Mr. Walker gave her photographs on which he had marked the word "here" and arrows to show the spots where she was to look for the soft drink cans, she said. She said she gave the photographs Friday to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Mrs. Puma said she rehearsed the route under Mr. Walker's instructions three times in his car, once in the afternoon with Mr. Walker and twice that night alone.

During her solo runs, Mrs. Puma said Mr. Walker had told her he would be "out in the field," apparently in a second car that he had rented for the day when they reached the Washington area. "At the time," she said, "I figured he was in some cocktail lounge."

She said Mr. Walker told her to call over his car's citizens' band radio the message, "This is Mobile 1, proceeding to accident scene," and then drive to the next can if there was no response.

In case of a radio response, she said, her instructions were to return to the Ramada Inn in Rockville, Md., where they had returned in between the rehearsals.

Mr. Walker was arrested at that hotel last Sunday. F.B.I. agents said that before his arrest they followed Mr. Walker from Norfolk and watched him drop a trash bag near the spot de-

scribed by Mrs. Puma, not far from Rockville.

Mrs. Puma said that she now recalls only that the bag she dropped in 1977 "contained some paper cups and stuff." She did not examine it closely, she said, because "the whole thing was just so goofy."

Classified Documents Reported

According to the F.B.I., the bag that Mr. Walker left by the road Sunday contained 129 classified documents taken from the aircraft carrier Nimitz. Mr. Walker's son, Michael, 22, a yeoman assigned to the Nimitz's onboard operations office, was arrested Wednesday and also charged with espionage.

Mrs. Puma said she did not know the purpose of the 1977 trip, but realized from news stories this week that she might have been unwittingly involved in espionage. Her story appeared today in The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, and she amplified it in an interview.

Mrs. Puma said that she met Mr. Walker in the early 1970's when she rented an apartment in a building he owned here. As an undergraduate student with no income, she said she became its resident manager with reduced rent and a free telephone.

She said that Mr. Walker later hired

her as a sales representative for one of his businesses, the American Association of Professional Salespersons. She said she quit in 1977 "because I just didn't feel good about it." She also was preparing to enter a graduate course in creative writing at Old Dominion University, where she received a master's degree earlier this month.

She said she continued for a brief time doing work for some publications owned by Mr. Walker, but she said she has not seen him since 1977 "except in the supermarket."

'To Me, Not Exciting'

Mr. Walker often talked of his "sleuthype operations," she said, describing him as a "self-deluded James Bond when he was really an Inspector Clouseau."

"I thought he had a picture of himself that nobody else had — one of an exciting personality," she said. "To me, it was not exciting."

She said she agreed to help Mr. Walker in 1977 because she owed him \$300 he paid to repair an automobile. "He knew I didn't have it," Mrs. Puma said. "It was very easy to accept jobs from him. I already knew how flaky he was and I was amused at this junket."